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REVIEWS

THREE SPANISH AMERICAN NOVELS

The A. B. C. Conference, called to discuss the Mexican situation, and the alignment of many of the nations of Latin America on the side of the Allies in the great world war have awakened in the peoples of both American continents a mutual interest and a growing desire for a realization of the Pan-American federation, so long the dream of many. To teachers of Spanish in the United States has come the call to do their "bit" in stimulating this interest and in bringing about a better understanding of our southern neighbors. The response has been a willing one and has been nation-wide. In consequence, there has been an increasing demand for text-books whose subject-matter should deal with South and Central America and Mexico as well as with Spain. This demand has been met by the appearance of many such books: grammars and readers, books for composition and books on commercial Spanish. The bulk of these contain some variation on the South American tour, real or imaginary, and the Spanish text is for the most part material made to order by the editor and presumably cut to the measure of his students, and perhaps also to that of those who are to do the teaching. For, while many American teachers of Spanish have traveled and studied in Spain and know the mother-country well, it must be admitted that comparatively few know much about the countries of Spanish America. For this reason *realia* must be provided in the way of maps and pictures, and very full historical and geographical data must be given. This has been the mission of these constructed texts, and they have proven exceedingly useful and of great informational value. But excellent as many of them are, and carefully and conscientiously edited, material of this kind does not give the American student the real spirit of Spanish America.

Professor Keniston offers as his reason for the edition of "María" here discussed, his belief "that the easiest method of studying the life of another people is to study their literature." He might go farther and say that it is the only way except to live for a time in the midst of that people. And incidentally it should be said that, though we must go to the mother-country for most of the really great things in Spanish literature, there are many productions of Spanish America that may be read for their intrinsic literary value, as well as for a practical aid to a better understanding of those peoples. Some poems by Spanish American poets have appeared in collections, and a few short stories, but until recently no long piece of Spanish American fiction has been available for school use. We, therefore, welcome these editions of three Spanish American novels that have been brought out within the past year and a half.

(a) **Amalia,** por José Mármol. Edited with exercises, notes and vocabulary by Ames Haven Corley, Assistant Professor of Spanish in Yale University. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1918. 8vo., xvi + 300 pp. (150 text, 22 exercises, 22 grammatical notes, 31 The Verb, 74 vocabulary).

(b) **María** (Novela Americana), por Jorge Isaacs. Edited with exercises, notes and vocabulary by Ralph Hayward Keniston, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Romance Languages, Cornell University. Ginn & Company, Boston, 1918. 12mo., xiv + 209 pp. (124 text, 16 notes, 11 exercises, 54 vocabulary).

(c) **La Navidad en las Montañas.** A Spanish American story by Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, with introduction, notes and vocabulary by Edith A. Hill, University of Redlands, and Mary Joy Lombard, High School, Redlands, Cal. D. C. Heath & Co., Boston, 1917. 12mo., vii + 107 pp. (64 text, 3 notes, 39 vocabulary).

(a) What Professor Corley has aimed to do in his edition of "Amalia" he has done well. He says it "has been prepared with the needs of beginners in Spanish constantly in mind. The notes are intended to be thorough . . .," and they are, being divided between grammatical notes and historical footnotes, the latter in Spanish. Sometimes they are so thorough that they repeat the same information, as the derivation of *Mashorca,* note, p. 3, and note, p. 174, to the same line. The grammatical notes seem almost too detailed, even for a beginner, who ought to know that *al* = *a* + *el* (p. 2, l. 8); and *dar* has the meaning "take" in the vocabulary, then why *dar el paso,* "take the step (note, p. 2, l. 25), especially as *dar un paseo* is given in the vocabulary? Why not put all such phrases there, so the student will have but one place in which to look for them? *No poder menos de* is explained in the vocabulary, making unnecessary the note to page 39, l. 6: *no pudieron menos de,* "could not help." But these and similar cases may all be attributed to the editor's desire to leave nothing unexplained.

Typographically the book is almost perfect, the very few errors are negligible. The illustrations, ten in number, including a map of Argentina, and a colored frontispiece of the national flag, are well chosen and excellently printed.

To reduce a novel of over six hundred pages to the limits of a practical school text is indeed difficult, especially if the desire is to render it usable for beginners. And here rests the question of the merits of this edition. It is doubtful whether "Amalia" is suitable for beginners, even if they could afford the time at that stage of their course to read it. It is "one of the most exciting tales in literature," but there are many sources from which the beginner can obtain a more practical vocabulary. Besides, in this edition many of the most exciting parts are omitted. In the elimination of the intrigues and schemes of Rosas, we lose a comprehension of his true character, though fortunately the scene between the Dictator and his daughter has been kept almost intact. The love story of Amalia and Eduardo is well preserved, as is that of Florencia and Daniel, but the reconstructed ending weakens the impression of the entire book and mollifies the horrors and cruelties of the

Rosas régime. The tribute to the United States and to its consul, Mr. Slade (Part 5, Chapter XV), is retained, including the author's footnote, but the omission of the rôle of Don Cándido Rodríguez is unfortunate. The quaint writing master with his "caña de la India" affords a pleasing bit of humor in a maze of political intrigue and romantic sentimentality. The edition may truly be said to be not "Amalia" by José Mármol, but as it appears in some of the announcements: Mármol's "Amalia" by Professor Corley.

Thirty pages of the text are devoted to a summary of the Spanish verb, taken almost bodily from the Fuentes and François Grammar, published by the same company. Such a summary may be desirable in a first reader, but "Amalia" should certainly not be used as such. How much we should prefer thirty pages more of Mármol's story, to include some of the omissions above mentioned! The *Cuestionario* is excellent and some teachers will find it useful as a catechism on Spanish American history and geography. It could well be sacrificed to a few more pages of the story. Then we should have a text suitable for advanced high-school or second-year college classes, where the book really should be read, and where it would prove of inestimable value as a study of the life and history of the Argentine.

(b) Some of us have awaited for some time a school text of "María," and Professor Keniston's edition leaves little to be desired. It is carefully edited, the vocabulary sufficiently complete and the notes well chosen. Difficult passages are explained rather than translated, and historical references are fully discussed. It is obviously *not* edited for beginners, but for second or third-year classes, in which the best known novel of Spanish America could well be substituted for some of the works of Spanish fiction usually read.

The book is well printed, though the type is small. The illustrations are pleasing and in harmony with the romantic atmosphere of the story. The introduction is concise and interesting and is followed by a brief bibliography that will be especially useful to the high-school teacher whose reference library is limited. Professor Keniston has included some exercises, as is almost inevitable in present-day texts, but intends them to be merely illustrative. They are well-worded, and are there for those who wish them.

Professor Keniston has reduced the text "by the omission of episides which are unessential to the plot as well as largely local in vocabulary." He says further: "I trust I have not so pruned as to destroy the simple beauty of the story." He has not done so. Unlike "Amalia," it is the love-plot that is all-essential, and it is the sentimental tragedy of María and Efraín that has endeared the book to thousands the world over. Here there are no political intrigues, no great historical character dominating the novel. The text would afford a somewhat better picture of Colombian life if some of the episodes dealing with the humbler classes could have been retained, such as the slave dance in Chapter V, and the tiger hunt in Chapter XXI, the latter one of the most thrilling chapters in the book. A few of these episodes would have relieved the sentimentality of the book and would not have materially increased its length. Local words are not numerous and could have been indicated in the

vocabulary. In fact, it should be a rule in editing Spanish American texts not to eliminate Americanisms, but to call the student's attention to them in the notes or vocabulary, preferably the latter. While it may not be desirable that the student should memorize such words, it is well for him to realize some of the differences between the language of Spain and that of Spanish America, and to know that in his intercourse with any of these countries, a special vocabulary must be added to the one he has acquired in his school work. And incidentally, stories containing Mexicanisms will be very acceptable to those of us who are teaching in the Southwestern States, where the prevalent Spanish is the everyday speech of Mexico.

(c) "La Navidad en las Montañas" is not a great novel, as are the two just discussed, but a charming sketch of a small Mexican village, written by one who came out from such a village to be a great statesman and one of the greatest literary men of his country. As an introduction the editors have borrowed from Dr. Frederick Starr's "Modern Mexican Authors" a portion of his sympathetic biography of Altamirano. Since he is so little known to teachers of Spanish, they might have added some details concerning his literary work, especially his interesting volume, "Paisajes y Leyendas," and perhaps given a synopsis of "El Zarco," which portrays so excellently the Mexican bandit, a figure so much talked about in recent years.

The notes and vocabulary are very inadequate and very incomplete, besides containing a number of errors, some also occurring in the text. *Nacimiento* in the vocabulary has simply, "see note," (though there is no note to the word), but it occurs frequently with the usual meaning, "birth," as p. 30, l. 10, and p. 28, l. 28. Its specific meaning (p. 3, l. 2) is not explained in a note to that line, but to *Belén* (p. 3, l. 4). The note to p. 9, l. 18, has *Alva* for *Álava; Monseñor* as the title of a bishop is not in the vocabulary, nor is it explained in the note to *Les Misérables* (p. 66); *milador* (p. 15, l. 20) should read *imitador; Reyes magos* (p. 3, l. 18), of course, means the Three Wise Men, but the student should be given the literal translation also, since he may not know the meaning of *magos; oigo* is given in the vocabulary, but *óigalos* (p. 29, l. 29) is not explained. *Ave María* is translated "Hail Mary," but this would scarcely be intelligible in the poem, p. 30, l. 29; *sopa* is glossed as "soup," but do the editors wish the student to translate p. 31, l. 1: "A shepherd, eating *soups*"? *Torta* is given as "cake," and *manteca,* "lard, fat, butter." Shall we translate p. 31, l. 11: *una torta de manteca* as "a cake of lard, fat *or* butter"? *Gitana* is given, but not *gitanilla* (p. 33, l. 2), nor is *pobrecito* (p. 52, l. 27), yet other diminutives, as *hermanito* and *portalito,* are included. *Hombre de bien* (p. 61, l. 9) is not translated nor explained; *no poder menos* is in the vocabulary, but *no pudo más* (p. 53, l. 2) is not, nor is *esposa* (p. 46, l. 13), though *esposo* is. Why is *¡que!* as an exclamation (p. 45, ll. 4 and 5) not included when care is taken to put in the vocabulary so simple a word as *y,* "and"? *De pronto* (p. 58, l. 13) is not translated, though the rest of the passage is explained in the note. For *echar* the only meaning given is "to throw," yet what about *se echó a llorar* (p. 58, l. 12)? And *se puso a* in the next line, which is not glossed? Shall we translate

la señora madre (p. 50, l. 1), "the lady mother" (vocabulary)? Would not a note be desirable? No explanation is given of such idioms as *se trata de* (p. 47, l. 14); *a cargo de* (p. 47, l. 22), nor *he hecho lo posible* (p. 46, l. 29). These are but a few of the many passages which should be elucidated for any except the very advanced student. The note to *pacholes* (p. 19, l. 29) says: "*Pachol* is not found in the dictionaries, but its apparent meaning is *pod.*" Cecilio A. Robelo in "Diccionario de Aztequismos" (Cuernavaca, 1904) defines the word as follows: "*Pachol,* (PAZOLLI: maraña. radicales desconocidas) Pelo enmarañado." (p. 629). The "Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado" gives the same definition, and as a synonym, *greña.* The meaning is evidently "vines" or "young plants."

The biographical and geographical notes might be more complete without greatly increasing the size of the book. Four lines are given to Humboldt, while Garcilaso de la Vega is dismissed as "a Spanish poet," and the great Lope de Vega gets but little more mention. Cervantes scarcely "*was* Spain's most famous author" at the time he wrote, if we may judge by his poverty and the hardships of his life, though he has doubtless become so since.

The text has no exercises and is apparently intended to introduce the student to the life and literature of Mexico, rather than to be used as a drill-book in conversation and composition. As such it is very welcome, and there is room for editions of some of the greater novels of Mexico, selected from the works of Rafael Delgado, Federico Gamboa, López-Portillo, and others. "La Navidad en las Montañas" is short and should find a place in the second or third year of high school, as well as in college classes devoted to the study of Spanish American literature. The story has been cut very little; suspension points are used to indicate the few omissions.

These three editions show a wide range of editorial workmanship. (a) marks the extreme of careful attention to detail. The student is almost lost in the maze of "helps"; with two sets of notes, vocabulary, and a treatise on the verb, he will find everything he needs to know laid out before him —if he looks in the right place, sometimes, perhaps, being in doubt just where to look first. By cross-references he can learn grammar to his heart's content, and if he memorizes the exercises he can discuss Rosas, Buenos Aires and Argentine history. The tendency in text-making nowadays is towards the type of (a), and it is no doubt most desirable when the subject-matter is suited to beginners, but in the present case this may be seriously questioned. (c) gives the student almost no help. It is little more than a reprint of the text, since, as has been shown, the reader must go to a dictionary anyway for many definitions, and the material in the very few notes may be found in any encyclopedia or in the "Pequeño Larousse," which every teacher of Spanish should have at hand. It makes available, however, for advanced classes an excellent little sketch of Mexican life and customs. (b) is a happy medium between these two extremes. It gives the student in classes to which "María" is really adapted, all the help he needs, yet there is nothing superfluous, save perhaps the illustrative exercises. Professor Keniston's suggestion that the text be used as a drill-book in conversation will not meet with universal approval. Some of us prefer drilling the stu-

dent on more commonplace topics than the story of two romantic lovers in little-known Colombia. This does not imply that it is not profitable for the teacher to discuss in Spanish the parts read and to encourage students to do the same, but that is a step far beyond the usual conversation exercises with their set questions and answers. How many of us would recommend "Ivanhoe," "The Last of the Mohicans," or "The Vicar of Wakefield" as conversation books for a class in Buenos Aires studying English? Yet these are assigned as high-school reading in literature, and would be valuable in giving the Argentine student something of the spirit of England and the United States. Let us have conversation and more conversation, composition and more composition, but let us select the material for such conversation and composition from the everyday life of Spain and Spanish America rather than from historical and romantic fiction. Then, when the student has acquired a certain feeling for the language and can at least combine simple sentences in Spanish, let us use these great works of literature to put him in closer touch with the mother-country and her offspring in the New World and to make him more sympathetic with the peoples whose language he is learning.

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